

Passport Out of Derry

tvfordessert

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Eddie Kaspbrak won't allow himself to leave for college without slaying his last demon in Derry.

Passport Out of Derry

Under the light of Derry's dreary August moon, Ben Hanscom's deranged history lessons had an unpleasant habit of coming to life. Richie Tozier cursed the fellow Loser as he walked along the streets that appeared empty only to an untrained eye - but he knew better. Thanks to his friend's insistence on spending many sleepless nights in their town's exceedingly creepy library, Richie understood he was strolling along a living map of supernatural devastation. Big Ben wasn't entirely to blame, Richie's firsthand encounters with demon clowns, psychotic bullies, and high school psychics teachers tainted his residence in their own way. He was tremendously relieved that this would be his last time wandering the streets of Derry, Maine for the foreseeable future.

Just when the solitude of this voyage was about to drive Richie crazy, he spotted a comforting silhouette pacing in the distance. The unstable outline that bleed anxiety into the evening sky unmistakably belonged to Eddie Kaspbraks. Unbeknownst to Eddie, he was serving as an anchor on which Richie could focus to drown out the gruesome mental images of Derry's past that kept infiltrating his mind as he made his way to this rendezvous.

There was something undeniably endearing about Eddie's natural state of unease, even from this distance. Richie suspected his friend was wound tight from birth because he'd yet to see him relax. During their sophomore year, Richie had become persistent that Eddie smoke a joint and when he finally broke, nothing. A high Eddie was, of course, hilarious in its own right, but even the influence of marijuana could not seem to calm the hypochondriac down. He continued to pile on pressure as they grew up: AP classes, volunteer work, and general resume-building kept him constantly on edge. Not to mention all of that bottled-up trauma.

Though Richie teased and pressured his friend to unwind, he found this high-strung state appealing as Eddie wore it rather adorably. Some of his favorite moments in Derry included pestering Eddie the entire month of his SATs or coaching him through his valedictorian speech. He supposed that tonight was another one of those

milestones, as they were both leaving Derry for "the real world" tomorrow.

While developing the itinerary for their last summer together, the Losers appeared to find a degree of entertain in the fact that Richie and Eddie were to depart on the same day. It admittedly gave Richie some satisfaction as well; if he were the president of The Loser's Club, Kaspbraks would certainly be his VP.

As he closed in on his destination, Eddie finally took on form beyond that of a distant shape. Richie considered this a perfect opportunity to scare his friend who appeared entirely unaware of his surroundings. The anxious pacing continued and it even sounded as though he was whispering lowly under his breath. Richie decided it wasn't worth waking the entire population of Maine up at a godforsaken hour, so he mercifully let out a gentle throat-clearing cough as he approached.

"Where is everyone?" He pushed on the bridge of his glasses as if his spectacles would somehow combat the darkness before him to spot any of Derry's remaining Losers. "Don't tell me I'm early, I can't blow my no-fucks-given attitude on my last day in this shithole."

"What do you mean, everybody?" Eddie blinked rapidly to combat his confusion.

"You know, Bill? Mike? I assume this is some kind of Loser's club send-off for us, right?"

"What made you think that?" The one who was clearly in-the-know about this meeting accused.

"I don't know Eddie." Richie now launched into his patented over-the-top sarcasm. "What the hell am I supposed to think when I receive a phone call at two in the fucking morning requesting my presence at one of Derry's esteemed one-star parks?"

"I suppose the edging could use a little work..." Eddie's eyes drifted down to the grass below him.

"What the fuck are you talking about? Why am I here, man?" Richie

was growing impatient. "In case you don't remember, I still have some last minute packing, aka all of it, to do."

"No, I remembered." Eddie's voice bubbled up revealing the sentimental heart lingering beneath the surface.

In all fairness, this summer had taken an emotional toll on even Richie. The Loser's Club got up to some of their absolute best adventures yet but every moment felt soaked in a bittersweet atmosphere. The goodbyes had already started when Beverly, who had spent nearly the whole summer back with them, returned home to Portland and Stan left for university early to participate in some special nerd program. With Richie and Eddie's impending departures, the amount of tolerable people in Derry would plummet down to an all time low by this time tomorrow.

"So..." Richie inquired.

"So?" His best friend was needlessly defensive.

"Are you gonna tell me why the fuck you dragged my ass out of bed at two in the morning or -"

"Okay, first off: you just told me you were packing. So I know that's a lie." Eddie interjected.

"And second off?"

"Secondly," Eddie subconsciously corrected. "I needed to talk to you."

"Yeah, you said as much on the phone."

The information Richie Tozier received from his brief telephone conversation with Eddie only a half hour prior could be summarized as follows: "meet me at the park in front of the library in twenty minutes" and "I need to talk to you". So far, Eddie hasn't added much, by way of intel, to the discourse.

"I couldn't sleep."

"What's new?" Eddie's anxiety had the tendency to manifest in many forms, chiefly insomnia. Luckily for him, the rest of the Loser's

maintained terrible sleeping habits as well. Richie particularly had attended to many early morning phone calls and walks in an effort to calm his friend down. Much of the bonding that made them two of the closest among their friends occurred on those nights.

"I'm afraid that I won't be able to leave Derry tomorrow." The pacing returned.

"What are you talking about, you hate this backward-ass haunted house of a town as much as I do!" Richie exclaimed, re-animated as he sat on the precipice of life outside of Derry. "Plus, we made a pact to tell this hell-hole to kiss both of our asses together tomorrow, remember?"

"I know Beverly's happier away and I'm sure Stan is too...but tomorrow's not really about leaving Derry for me." He thought aloud.

"What's the issue?" Richie could not grasp the premise of Eddie's woes.

"You." Eddie stopped and made eye contact with him for the first time since they had started this exchange.

"Okay, that's harsh." Richie playfully jabbed, still not clued into Eddie's meaning. "I mean, have I been labeled a "problem child" on multiple occasions? Yes, but by no means -"

"Leaving you! The problem is leaving you asshole, because I -" Eddie pumped the brakes the moment he realized his words were falling out uncontrollably.

"Because you what?" Richie cocked an eyebrow and teased as a means to deflect from what he could tell was about to be an uncomfortably sincere moment. "I didn't catch that last part Kaspbraks."

"Because I love you, okay?" He admitted his frustrating reality swiftly, before pivoting into a rambling justification. "And, I don't know, maybe I've always loved you and I couldn't leave tomorrow without saying -"

"Whoa, slow down, okay?" Richie reacted. "Geez, you're gonna bust a

vein or something."

"Is that really all you have to say to me right now?" Eddie's body behaved as if it were a wind-up toy that had just been released, bouncing around flustered and directionless.

"What do you want me to say?" Richie acted as if he was constantly chasing off suitors but, in reality, he had no experience with confessions of this nature. "This is pretty fucking inconvenient."

"Inconvenient? *Inconvenient*?" His admirer was insanely worked up, while Richie was just enjoying the show. "You know what's inconvenient, Richie? Having the one thing you probably care most about in the world be a shameless smartass who still laughs at dick-jokes and boasts video game high-scores from middle school."

"Hey, I could still take anyone in Street Fighter." This defense just caused Eddie to tense-up further, but he was too winded to respond which allowed Richie to circle back to the first point he wanted to make upon hearing this confession. "But let me get this straight, Kaspbraks. You're telling me that I wasted my entire summer shitting-around when I could have been making out with the most adorable nerd in Derry, besides myself."

"You know, I-" Eddie launched into instant defense, letting the words wash over him on a slight delay. "Wait, what did you call me?"

"I said you were a nerd." He smirked.

"I hate you."

"Really, because last time I checked - you *loved* me." Richie corrected, but then amplified his chiding to its usual childish level. "Wait no, you're *in love* with me. Like every time I walk in a room you swoon and picture us getting married on a lake, right?"

"Do you ever shut up?" Eddie furrowed his brow in an irritated manner.

"No." The wise-cracker confirmed. "But I imagine that's one of countless charming qualities that made you fall in love with me."

"I knew you'd make me regret this."

"Is that why you waited a fucking eternity to tell me?"

"What makes you think I've been in love with you *that* long?" Eddie defended once more.

"Besides the fact that every one falls in love with me the moment they meet me?" He quipped, proving his ego didn't need the extra padding that Eddie had unknowingly provided. "How about the fact that literally moments ago you said, and I quote, that you may have *always* been in love with me because I am by far the coolest guy in all of Maine."

"Okay, well I definitely didn't say that last part." Eddie had forgotten the amount of unintended transparency which had laced his initial confession.

"We can debate what was or wasn't said all night if that's how you want to spend your last hours in Derry but, if I were you, I would suggest employing part two of your plan."

"There was no 'part two', that was the whole plan." The fact of the matter was, Eddie felt like he could not cross Derry's threshold without sharing these feelings. His only intention was to get this emotional weight off his chest; he did not have room for any more luggage in his car tomorrow.

"So, you were just gonna tell me you loved me and then literally run off to a different state?"

"Yes?"

"And, what if I loved you back?" Richie challenged.

"I honestly hadn't considered it."

"Then you're an even bigger idiot than I thought."

"So, you're saying that -" Eddie reached to hear the words, but Richie cut him off.

"I'm saying that you better get your shit together and kiss me before the fucking sun comes up."

Eddie instead became entirely still when faced with the prospect of punctuating on a crush which he had considered hopeless and ill-advised for most of his adolescence.

"I forgot, you don't know how to kiss someone who's not your mom." Richie took the necessary steps to close the space between them. "Here, let me show you."

He clasped his hands on either side of Eddie's face and planted his lips gently yet confidently on his friend. Eddie came alive at Richie's touch, kissing the boy back fervently. It may have been the evening's heightened emotions but this gesture exuded more passion than anticipated.

Their lips caressed softly and gracefully under Derry's moon and dim street lamps. Any last reservations the two might have held about the nature of their feelings for one another were irreversibly shattered in that moment.

Of course, Richie Tozier and Eddie Kaspbraks were confirming their evidently shared affections just before they had to drive away from Derry in opposite directions.

"What now?" This thought came crashing down on Eddie as he broke from his friend's kiss.

They stood defiantly against their circumstances like a linge claire painting -two shadows in the park, hands intertwined, foreheads pressed together, desperate to escape the reality of the situation they'd been painted into.

"I still have to finish packing." Richie laughed half-heartedly as he found these circumstances less than ideal. "You wanna help?"

"Yes." Eddie co-signed this plan, despite the fact that it involved literally packing the boy he loved up to leave him. "I'm honestly not interested in letting you out of my sight until I absolutely have to."

"I can accept those terms." Was all Richie retorted to a rather sappy

sentiment, that Eddie honestly thought would garner more flack.

Richie stole one last moonlit kiss before the two walked back in the direction he came. The dark corners of Derry now seemed brighter to Richie Tozier, illuminated by memories of his youth especially those spent with Eddie Kaspbraks.

-- EPILOGUE --

"That's enough about me though, how's Derry?" Beverly Marsh had just finished catching Bill Denbrough up on her life in Portland.

"Honestly? Really sad." He was always glad to hear she was thriving especially after all she had been through, but he had to address the sullenness on his end of the line.

"Oh my god, Eddie and Richie left today." Bev remembered, feeling selfish for rambling on about herself for so long. "How was it?"

"It was a lot harder than I thought, saying goodbye to both of them at once like that." Bill recounted. "Ben, Mike, and I went out for lunch afterward and they just stared at me the whole time."

"This has to be hard on them, staying behind."

"It made me not want to leave them, but at the same time -"

"You have to get the hell out of Derry before it eats you alive." Beverly completed a sentiment who's truth she knew too well.

"Exactly."

"So, tell me more. Did Richie cry?" She asked eagerly.

"No, but get this - I got to Richie's a little early, since I figured he would still need help last minute packing."

"Fair." Bev interjected.

"But guess who was there already?"

"Eddie." Beverly smugly assumed.

"Yeah," he laughed. "Except I saw Eddie yesterday, and he was wearing the same outfit."

"What are you saying?" He could tell by her inflection, that she sat upright at this prospect.

"I think he was there all night."

"No way! Do you think they finally..." As much as the redhead hated Derry, she yearned to be with her friends at important moments like this; unfortunately she often had to renew her Loser's Club membership through distant interactions.

"I don't know." He knew.

"Well, find out!" She insisted. "Because if so, Stan owes me some serious money!"

"You guys made a bet on this?" Bill recalled one visit where Beverly had become obsessed with making bets with all the Losers about increasingly random and trivial matters.

"Of course we did! Were there any other hints?" Bill wanted to withhold the strangest part of his morning for the shock-value, but crumbled under her further questioning because he just needed to share.

"I don't know, what would you consider this?" Bill then attempted retell the story precisely as it played out before his stunned eyes earlier that day. "After Richie said goodbye to each of us, he got in his car to leave but dramatically exclaimed that he had forgotten something. Then he: got out of his car, grabbed Eddie by the waist, practically ate off his face, got back in his car, and drove away."

"WHAT?!?" Beverly exploded into the phone. "Why the hell didn't you lead with that?"

"I was getting there, but *someone* kept cutting me off." He chided even though he'd been intentionally saving it to elicit this exact reaction.

Bill's neatly packed room was now flooded with a joyous laughter that came pouring through his phone line.

"You should have seen Eddie when he turned back to us." Bill joined her chuckling as well, remembering Eddie's fire-engine-red face cutting through the early morning.

"But seriously," she said despite the ongoing amusement that tainted her voice. "Has anyone told Stan?"

"I don't believe so." At least, he hadn't talked to Stan yet, so he was pretty sure no one else had. Everyone still seemed to be processing the morning's events.

"Okay, I have to call him *now*."

"Are you serious?" This bet obviously held grave importance, as she was cutting their call short.

"Yes, I must gloat!" Bev insisted excitedly. "Don't worry, I'll call you back."

The line went out and Bill smiled picturing Stan Uris' reaction. He only wished all the Losers had been gifted that front-row seat to, what he considered, the inevitability of the century.